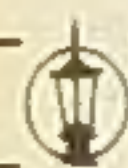


September 5, 1985

Vol. 1, No. 1

AVALON



Missouri Southern's Student Literary Magazine



Missouri Southern State College,
Joplin, MO 64801-1595



Fiction

The Letters of William J. Bradfield, III

By Susan Stone

Magic Spiders on a Steel Web

By Doug Johnson

The Key

By Hermann Muller

Poetry

Martin C. Oetting

Curtis Steere

Susan Stone

Craig Ball

Editor's Notes

By Simon P. McCaffery

Welcome to the first edition of *Avalon*. Whether you are a writer, an artist, or just a reader, I hope this is cause for celebration. *AVALON* is Missouri Southern's first literary magazine for students.

Previously, students were limited to submitting original work to *The Winged Lion*, which is published every Spring.

Last year, while helping to judge material for *The Winged Lion*, I became aware for the first time the number of students who write fiction and prose. Many are not English majors at all, but come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds. I also became aware of *The Winged Lion's* space limitations, which is in and around 38 pages. While this is a substantial amount, it does restrict the number of accepted entries, especially fiction, which really eats up the room.

It hit me one day that what the writers at Southern really needed was a monthly or bi-monthly magazine that would publish fiction, poetry, and essays exclusively. Hopefully, such a publication would boost the morale of the unknown writer and generate enthusiasm. Writers do like to see their work in print. It boosts their egos.

It would also allow their work to be read by their peers, instead of languishing at the bottom of dresser drawer or in a notebook of old papers. Probably the first, best reason for the magazine would be to allow the fledgling writer a realm to work in. The only way to become a better writer is to write. If writers are encouraged to write, then they stand a much better chance of gaining skill as a writer.

So here we are. *AVALON* is a reality now, appearing monthly (hopefully) with *The Chart*. In future issues we hope to

add pages of work and expand the amount of artwork. There will also be a page for letters from readers who wish to input comments, ideas and opinions. Also, guest columns by other writers will appear in later issues. For the writers who are seriously considering submitting material to professional publications, a special column will begin next issue explaining tips on preparing and sending manuscripts.

In October, *AVALON* will conduct a contest for the best five stories dealing with themes in what else, horror and the macabre. These will appear in the Halloween issue.

At this point, as far as the young artists and writers are concerned, the horizons are wide open. The talent is out there, and this is our chance to see it surface.

So submit!

Contributors

This issue of *AVALON* features three pieces of fiction and an assortment of poetry by a number of students currently attending Missouri Southern.

The Letters of William J. Bradfield, III is a contemporary story of a young man from a wealthy (and emotionally distant) atmosphere who spends a summer with his down-to-earth "hick" relatives. The author is Susan Stone, a business major. Susan Stone's poetry has appeared in last year's *Winged Lion*, and she is assembling material to submit to a publisher. Susan lives in Joplin with her husband, and together they are restoring and building a house.

Doug Johnson, an English major, is the author of *Magic Spiders on a Steel Web*. *Magic Spiders* centers on the joys of falling in and out of love and shadows the elusiveness of love for young adults. Johnson attended Southern for three years before transferring this fall to the University of Arkansas. An avid writer, Johnson managed to amass a summer's worth of work before leaving Southern. More of his work will appear in future issues.

The Key is a short psychological piece by a junior history major who wishes to use a pseudonym so as to not alarm his professors. Is Percy Walker telling the

truth? Is 10 years of planning about to pay off? I can tell you that this student is usually found gazing through a telescope when not delving into volumes of History. He also enjoys working with computer programming and design.

Contributing poets are Susan Stone, Curtis Steere, Martin C. Oetting, and Craig Ball.

Susan Stone's distinctive prose usually centers on an animal or creature, and her images are appropriately satisfying.

Craig Ball's prose and fiction have appeared in the last two editions of *The Winged Lion*. While Ball believes his interest in writing centers more strongly on fiction, his poetry, both in *The Winged Lion* and *AVALON* is promising. If you get a chance to read some back editions of the *Lion*, look his work up. Ball, a law enforcement major, is currently at work on more fiction, as well as learning to play the drums.

Curtis Steere comes to Southern from the West Coast, where he gained his first experience in art, calligraphy, and layout. Steere has kept a journal of prose, quips, and artwork for the last 15 years, and is an enormously creative contributor to *AVALON*. Besides poetry appearing in this issue, look for his illustration on page

seven, 11, and 12. Steere's artwork and writing will appear in future issues, hopefully in greater volume.

Contributing artwork to pages five and 10 is Annabelle Seeyle. Seeyle, a sophomore, has painted and sketched since high school and continues to expand the vistas of her work.

Martin C. Oetting, editor of *The Chart*, also contributes an early poem.

Photographs by Rick Evans also appear in this first edition.

AVALON

Missouri Southern's Student
Literary Magazine

AVALON is published monthly by Chart staff members, coordinated by Simon P. McCaffery. Chad D. Stebbins serves as Adviser.

All material (artwork or manuscripts) to be submitted should be delivered or mailed to The Chart Office, Room 117 of Hearn Hall. Phone extension is 228. If material is mailed, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope for return of material. NOTE: *AVALON* claims NO rights of any kinds pertaining to original work that appears, whether it be art or text.

The Letters of William J. Bradfield, III

By Susan Stone

Sunday, June 10

Dear Nathan,

Well, our summer vacation has finally begun and I have been shuffled off to the original Green Acres. You know that Mother and her husband have left for Europe and they won't be home until the first of August. So instead of taking me along or sending me to a resort, they mailed me to my Uncle Hank's farm.

Aunt Iris, my mother's sister, was just thrilled to see me. At the airport she slobbered a big kiss on my cheek right there in public. I have never been so embarrassed.

Then I had to submit to riding to the farm in an old jalopy that was just absolutely filthy. If they ever washed the car, the fenders would probably fall off since the dirt was the only thing that was holding them on. Aunt Iris kept rattling on and on about how much fun I was going to have and how she just couldn't wait for me to meet Doolie. I thought, "Who the hell is Doolie?" Well, I found out soon enough.

When we finally arrived at the old homestead, we were greeted by a huge pack of yapping dogs. No pedigrees of course. I was hoping that one of the mutts would be Doolie, but no such luck.

Doolie was not in sight, so Uncle Hank sounded the car horn. Around the side of the house I saw the biggest, red-headed oaf come bounding out of the family outhouse (I'm praying for constipation.) He barely had his trousers pulled up and he was still fumbling with his zipper when he reached me. Then he wrapped his enormous arms around me and nearly crushed me to death. Everything was going black and all I could smell was a mixture of sweat and lye soap.

Doolie was so excited that all he could do was grin and keep saying that we could pretend like we were brothers. God forbid.

I was very exhausted from the trip, so I asked if I could be shown to my room. I thought that this would be my escape. Not so. Doolie (my pretend brother) led me up to the attic, which is now our room.

The room is more shocking than the family car. It contains a small table on



which stands a fan, an old floor lamp with a very dingy, faded shade, a broken-down dresser, a small window and Doolie's iron frame bed. They were so generous to put a cot in the corner for me.

For dinner, Aunt Iris layed out a spread that could have fed ten hired hands. She served pot roast, corn-on-the-cob, green beans, mashed potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, home-made rolls, strawberry jam and the menu goes on and on. I didn't get to try any of the mashed potatoes, though. Doolie scraped the bowl clean before it even reached my end of the table. For dessert, Aunt Iris made a blue ribbon dutch-apple pie. Delicious. Aunt Iris is an excellent cook. Thank God for something.

I'm in the attic now. Doolie and Uncle Hank have gone out to do chores. Uncle Hank said to go ahead and get rested up. He said something about putting up fence at the north forty tomorrow, but I think he was only kidding.

Write me soon, Nathan. I need to hear from civilization.

Sincerely yours,

William J. Bradfield, III

P.S. Please send me a case of Dial soap.

Monday, June 25

Dear Nathan,

I recieved your letter yesterday. It must be nice spending the summer at the Cape. Wish I was with you instead of being here at this plantation.

I have been real busy around here with building fences, shoveling manure out of stalls, slopping hogs, painting barns. My, what a vacation.

I told you about my arrival here. Well, my first night was a nightmare. I had just settled down on my cozy little cot when Doolie came clomping up the stairs. He burst into the room, snapping on the light and proceeded to tell me how we could be just like brothers. I told him OK just to shut him up. So he told me that he was going to call me Willie instead of William because Willie sounds better than William does. I said OK. I figured that I could put up with "Willie" for that length of time, also.

Then Doolie started grinning like an opossum and he asked me if I wanted to see something real neat. I was afraid to say anything, remembering the scene with the outhouse. Doolie reached way under his mattress and pulled out an old National Geographic magazine. I could tell that he looked at it all the time since the pages were frayed and worn. He sat down on my cot with his precious magazine and started showing me pictures of naked natives. I told him that it was a neat magazine, but I needed to get some sleep. So Doolie finally went to bed.

I had just started to doze off when Doolie started snoring. He sounds just like a clogged drain when he snores. And the room is stuffy and hot. We adjusted the fan so that it would oscillate back and forth on us, but every time it changed directions it clicked, then vibrated the whole table till it reached the other side. It was about 3 o'clock in the morning before I finally went to sleep that night.

At 5:30 am, Uncle Hank banged on the door and yelled, "Rise and shine, boys!" Doolie jumped out of bed, threw on his coveralls and leaped down the stairs with a bang! (This is the way it is every morning.) Well, that morning I put on my slacks and my new Izod shirt and casually strolled down the stairs. Uncle Hank took one look at me and his face nearly

dropped off. He firmly suggested that I wear some of his old coveralls since my clothes wouldn't last long building fence. I had planned on spending my day in town. But what could I say? So I put on the coveralls, ate a fantastic breakfast of bacon, sausage, fried potatoes, scrambled eggs, oatmeal and fresh milk (Aunt Iris is a great cook), then we set out for the north forty.

It has been the same routine for the past two weeks.

I told Uncle Hank that I must have gained at least 10 pounds with all of Aunt Iris's cooking, and he told me twenty pounds of that was muscle.

Uncle Hank does take a lot of pride in his farm. He is especially fond of his polled-hereford bull. Bull (that's his name) is a deep red with a big white face. Uncle Hank is the only one who ever tends to him. Everyone else just stays clear of Bull. People say Bull has some of the best offspring in the county.

The other night I got to meet some of the guys who live around here. They took Doolie and I hunting for these little birds that only come out at night. They are called snipes. I told them I didn't have a gun, but they said that you don't shoot snipes. Instead, you go out in the woods in the middle of the night and wait. When you here a snipe running through the leaves, you start yelling "Snipe! Snipe!" in a real high voice. (That scares them into standing still.) Then you blind them with a flashlight and throw a gunny sack over them. They say snipes are real hard to catch and it takes a lot of patience. So Doolie and I were determined to catch a whole bag full.

Well, we went out to the woods at about 11:00 pm and split up in pairs. Doolie and I were together of course. We must have waited for an hour when we heard the leaves rustling. We immediately started yelling, "Snipe! Snipe!" I turned on the flashlight and Doolie was ready to throw the bag on when we realized what we were about to catch was not a snipe at all. All I remember is seeing this black-and-white bushy tail sticking straight up in the air. That skunk sprayed us before we could even budge. Doolie and I took off running for home. My eyes and nose were burning and I threw up three times. Doolie started crying.

When we finally reached home, Uncle Hank made us go out into the field and told us to take a sponge bath with some canned tomatoes that Aunt Iris had. The tomatoes helped a little, but Uncle Hank told us we had to sleep in the hayloft for a while.

I'm not complaining. The hayloft is cooler than the attic, and the stars are so

bright here. Still, if the guys in the dorm could see me now.

Well, I had better get some sleep. If I ever catch any snipes I'll try to bring one home for you.

Sincerley yours,

William J. Bradfield, III
(Willie)

Dear Nathan,

I'm still here at the farm getting my summer tan the hard way, by working in the fields. Doolie is just one big freckle. All this slave labor has really done a number on my hands. My palms are so callused that they feel like pads on a dog's paw.

By the way, in my last letter I told you about the snipe hunt. Well, yesterday morning I asked Uncle Hank if he had ever caught a snipe. All he said, in his long southern drawl, was "Boy, there ain't no snipes." It looks like the guys pulled a good one on Doolie and I. Nathan, I would appreciate it if you wouldn't tell anybody about the hunt. I'll owe you one, pal.

I confronted Howard Munsin and Larry Carter, a couple of the guys who were in on the gag. They did apologize and took Doolie and I to the drive-in last night to make up for it.

When we got to the drive-in we parked next to Darold Green's car in the back row. Green is an obnoxious jerk who thinks he is really hot with the women. Well, I guess he was hot that night because he was down in the back seat with some broad.

Doolie kept asking where Darold was, so we told him that he was asleep in the back seat missing the movie. We told Doolie that he ought to go bounce on the back bumper of Green's car to wake him up.

Doolie went over and stood on the bumper and started jumping up and down. When Doolie finally saw what was going on, he just craned his neck and pressed his nose against the back window. He was really getting an eyefull. The broad started screaming and Green came flying out of the car. He yanked Doolie off the bumper and belted him right in the gut. Doolie's face turned pastey white. He looked like the life had drained right out of him.

I jumped on Green from behind, knocking him down. I didn't want to stay there and fight since Green is about forty pounds heavier than me and I didn't think I had much of a chance of coming

out alive. So I yelled at Doolie to get back in the car. Instead, Doolie started crying and took off running for home. Luckily, I was alot quicker than Green and I was able to duck his punches. The only thing that saved me was when Green threw his last punch at me and hit the speaker stand instead. He sank to his knees and started moaning. That's when I took off after Doolie.

It's about eight miles from the drive-in to our farm so I cut across some pastures to cut down on the distance. I was afraid that I might run into Bull, but the only problem I had was dodging the pancakes. It's hard to see those things in the dark.

When I reached the hayloft, I found Doolie behind some hay bales. He was shaking all over and was dripping sweat. I don't think any body had ever tried to fight with him before and it really shook him up. I talked to him for awhile and he finally calmed down.

This morning Doolie gave me his National Geographic magazine. I guess it was his way of saying thanks. I think Doolie has finally graduated.

Well, I'd better go. Doolie and I are supposed to paint the inside walls of his barn with a sprayer before noon. The first floor is made of concrete blocks and it's alot easier to spray it than brush.

We're going swimming this afternoon with some guys. Wish you were here, Nathan.

Your friend,

Willie

Tuesday, July 10

Dear Nathan,

Mother finally sent me a telegram the other day. Said she was having a nice time and that everyone was well. I was hoping that her husband would get disentary. They also won't be stateside until the twentieth of August. So I guess I get to stay here for another whole month.

Doolie and I have been doing alot of skinny dipping with the guys. There's a real big pond in some woods on Munson's farm. It covers about three-quarters of an acre and the deepest spot is about six feet. It has a small stream that runs through it so the water is always real clear.

At one end of the pond is a big, old oak tree. We have a rope tied up on one of it's branches and we use it to swing out over the water. We always have a contest to see who can do the biggest splash. All the guys do cannonballs, except for

Doolie. That Doolie. He's crazy. He likes to do spread eagles. He looks like a giant flying frog. And he always ends up in an ear piercing belly-flop. That smack seems to echo through the whole woods. Doolie always comes out giggling and his whole front is one big red whelp. It doesn't seem to bother him, though, because he just climbs right back up that tree and does it again and again. He always wins the splash contest, too.

Yesterday, we were swimming and we heard a bunch of girls giggling. We all jumped into the water and stood where the water came up to our chins. Except



Doolie. He just stood there laughing his dumb laugh, pointing at the screaming, laughing girls. I don't think he was aware that the water only came up to his knees. From where I was standing all I could see was his big, white butt. The girls were getting the full front view.

Our clothes were on the bank and the girls started grabbing up everything and took off running. We yelled at Doolie to catch them and get our clothes back. So Doolie started running through the woods after them. But he wasn't watching where he was going and he ran into a briar patch. He was nothing but scratches from the waist down.

We had to wait ther at the pond until dark, which was about five hours. We didn't have a stitch of clothing, not even shoes. And to get home we had to walk

through open fields. So we just waited. I was real proud of Doolie. I knew he was hurting pretty bad, but he didn't cry once.

When it was dark, Doolie and I took off for home through a cow field. It's a terrible feeling to step on a pancake barefooted. It squishes up between your toes and nearly engulfs your whole foot. I only stepped on three, but Doolie was in such a hurry to get home I simply lost count of how many he plowed through. It's embarrassing how cows look at you when you are naked. But I guess it isn't a very common sight for them.

When we reached home we washed our feet with a garden hose, then climbed up this dead elm tree and snuck into the attic window. I threw some clothes down to Doolie and we snuck off to the loft. I got some hydrogen peroxide out of the barn's medicine chest, and left Doolie to doctor up his scratches while I rushed around and did the chores.

This morning we found all of our clothes in a hollow tree stump down at the swimming hole. We are now planning our revenge.

I have got to go now and eat dinner. Aunt Iris has home-made ice cream and blackberry cobbler for dessert.

Write me real soon, Nathan.

Your friend,
Willie

Thursday, July 26

Dear Nathan,

I meant to write to you sooner, but things have been real bad around here. I've been in the hospital for the past week. Doolie was killed last Friday.

Friday evening, Doolie and I were coming in late from the fields and I stepped inside the doorway and started climbing up the ladder to the hayloft. All of a sudden I felt like I was being run over by a freight train. Bull was in the aisle and I hadn't seen him in the dark. He rammed into me and started using me as a plow.

Then I remember seeing Doolie jump on the head of the bull. I don't think Bull knew what hit him because he backed off real quick. For a second I thought Doolie had everything under control. But Bull just tossed his head and bounced Doolie off of the concrete wall. Doolie fell back onto Bull's head again and Bull just kept banging him against the wall. Doolie was flopping around like an old rag doll and he was bleeding real bad.

When Doolie finally fell to the ground, Bull's front left hoof stepped on Doolie's face. I remember that when Bull raised his hoof, Doolie's face was gone. Instead, all I could see was the white skull. I know it was only an instant, but it seemed like it took forever for the blood to start flooding out onto the surface.

I heard a couple of loud bangs and Bull fell down between Doolie and me. Uncle Hank had heard the comotion and had come out with his gun. He shot Bull in the heart and the head.

After everything stopped, I realized that a foamy blood was coming out of my nose and mouth and I was having a hard time breathing. Then I must have blacked out because I don't remember anything until I woke up in my hospital bed.

The doctors said that my right leg was broken in two places, and three of my ribs were broken and had punctured my left lung.

I'll be in the hospital for a few more days. Then I'm going to meet Mother at home.

I miss Doolie. He was OK.
See you soon, Nathan.

Your friend,

William J. Bradfield, III

Magic Spiders on a Steel Web

By Doug Johnson

Miriam Wirt was a lovely creature and Danny Jones loved her with an intense, consuming love. What he felt for her was nearly a madness, a wild compulsion, an unreined and undirected desire to search her out, to own and possess her absolutely and without anything held out, forever.

Danny Jones sat at his typewriter in his small, dingy apartment, alone and pounding words into a sheet of white paper, violently pounding the ancient keys, forming the logos of his secret and dark soul from the letters, portraying and painting his soul with patterned splashes of ink.

His soul raged inside him like a violent beast, like a burning demon, like a thing gone mad. He pulled the thoughts raging and flaming from his furious brain, reaching to the very depths of his secret, dark being, and then threw them onto the paper, longing only for them to be expressed, spent and exhausted.

For hours he sat there at the old battered desk—as he did nearly every afternoon before going to work at the department store—pounding at the ancient typewriter, expressing himself in wild, incoherent phrases, flaming words, striving for the secret logos, the buried word, the lost tongue, the secret, dark language of his dark soul that he so longed to speak.

Then finally, in a fit of claustrophobic madness, he violently pushed himself away from the battered desk, throwing himself out of the door and running down the echoing, dark stairs, and hurling himself into the streets.

He knew that the city would be full of its tangled moil, its hot knots of existence pouring madly through the streets in the afternoon, and as the pulsing, throbbing manswarm poured into the streets with their avarious hunger, he too slunk into their midst, peering into the strange, dark faces with a hunger so keen and so intense that he could hardly bare it.

He wanted to take them all into himself, swallow them down with the city and the earth in one great consumption. He wanted to know and search out every living soul that roamed the streets in the furious, hurried moil.

Echoing footsteps were all around him in a surried sound, a music, a dark music of existence, the rhythm, the tempo of life, the flowing tones, the unsearchable

structure of all that is.

He walked in the tangled moil, in the furious, swirling currents of mass, indefinable humanity, a power, a strange wonderful pain and joy welling up within him.

He wandered through the burning, furious intensity of the streets as long as he could bare it, and then, his soul full and brimming over with the joy and pain of the streets below, with overwhelming intensity, he flung himself again behind the ancient typewriter and began to write, to chronicle the strange, dark thoughts of his raging soul.

For so it is with a young man in love.

Time seemed to pass with the heaviness of lead in those endless days in which Danny Jones so wanted Miriam Wirt as his wife. Now they talked about the marriage they had planned for June continually. Miriam kept a guest list that grew and grew, mapped out the processes of the ceremony, pondered where the money would come from, decided who would attend her as bridesmaids and who would serve him as groomsmen.

When she arrived home in the afternoon to her apartment, she would go to the library and compile lists of publishers for Danny to look at and consider for his works, knowing that he spent the afternoons furiously working at his writing before going to work. All the while they longed for the night when they could fly to each other for peace and security from the worldly moil, hold each other passionately, and long for time to fly.

"Who do you want for your best man?" Miriam asked him one night while they sat on her couch, she working once again on her long lists of arrangements and plans that she kept in a small notebook, an exercise that Danny encouraged, thinking that if the plans were put in material form that the process of her being carried out would become inevitable.

"My uncle John, I suppose," Danny answered her. "If he can get a temporary leave of absence from the great war machine." The brother of Danny's mother, a suave and graceful man of great elegance and manly charm, was stationed in Fort Sill while making a career of the U.S. Army.

Miriam scratched out a name and

wrote in the name of Danny's uncle. Danny leaned over toward her, trying to see what had been there before.

"Unless you have someone better," Danny said, playfully reaching for the notebook.

"No!" she protested, jerking the little notebook away from him, laughing and trying to protect herself while he made movements to tickle her soft belly. "No! Stop it!" she cried and laughed as he tickled her.

She was indeed a beautiful creature, with large eyes and a delicate softness to her touch. He was in love with her face, with her delicate, feminine shoulders that were speckled like the belly of a brown trout, with her soft, long back that was also adorned with a spray of lovely freckles. He could feel the thick thudding of blood at his pulse and at his temples. He felt a surge of warmth and once again the keen, sharp desire for her burned in him like a merciless, consuming fire. He was like a starving man that must be content to look through a pane of glass at the most delicious food.

"Stop it!" she cried as he covered her belly with his quick, searching fingers. She laughed and breathed heavily. "Stop it!"

He drew away from her and she glared up at him with a playful, somewhat lustful, knowing smile.

"I think that I will allow you the choice of your own best man," she said when he had recovered her breath.

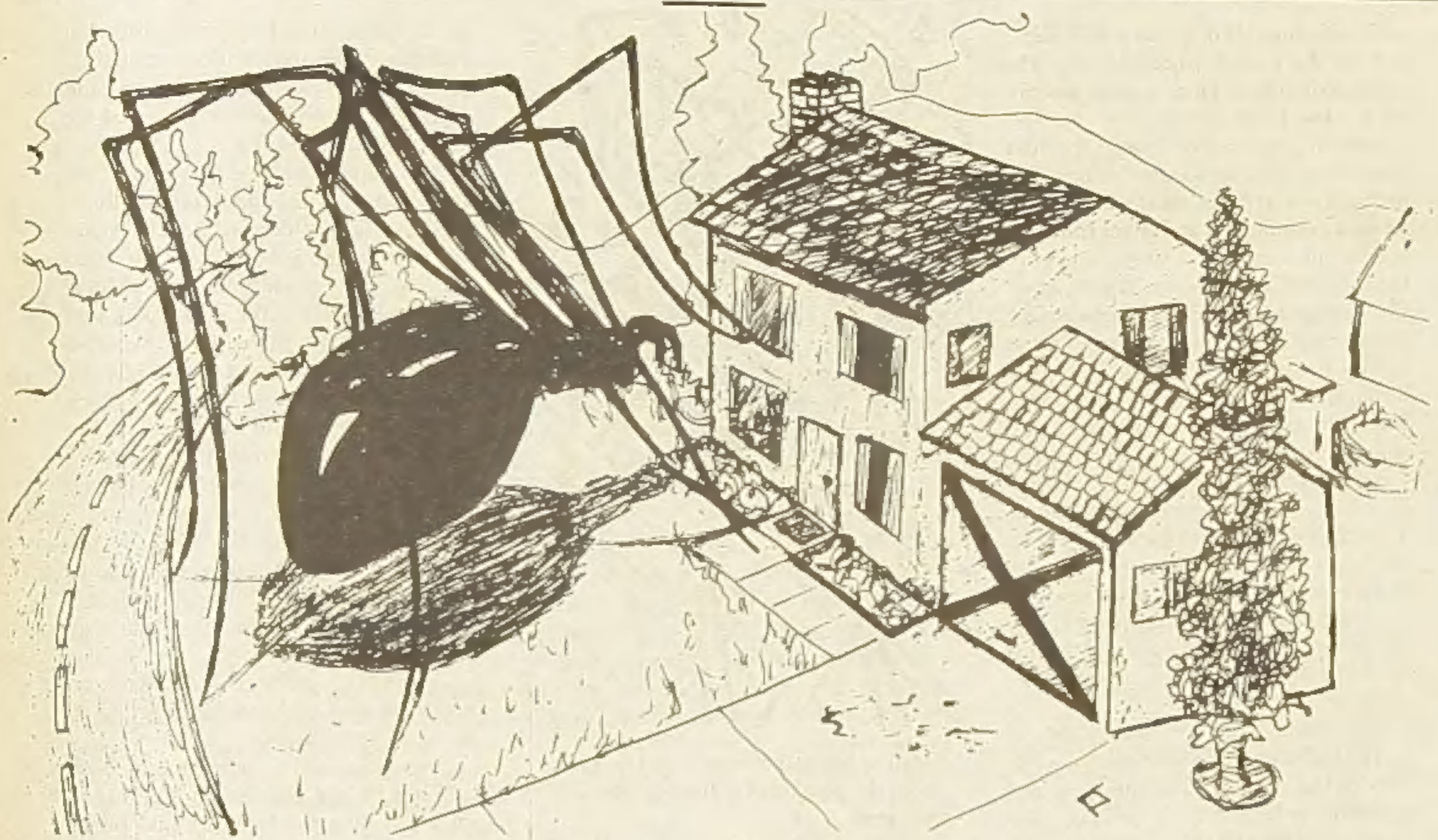
"Well, if you have someone better..." he smiled at her.

"Just don't tempt me," she said. "Now who do you want..."

"I want you!" he suddenly howled with ecstasy in his loud, oratorical voice. "I want you and only you!" He began tickling her again and she squirmed on the couch, dropping the little notebook on the floor and flinging her arms around him, squirming violently in his arms. "I want my little brown trout forever! I want to see her flop and squirm on the bank and watch her with fascinated, lustful eyes of hunger! I want to..."

"Danny!" she screamed helplessly with laughter.

"To fry her up in the finest butter and devour her forever!" he howled, as though he had not heard her desperate pleas,



with the high, playful passion rising in his voice.

After a moment he let her sink, drained and breathed heavily, again upon the couch and once again she glared at him with playful passion, a deep hunger for him burning in her large, expressive eyes.

He too breathed heavily, passionately, looking at her with the same distant, powerful hunger in his dark eyes. Once again he felt the blood race and thud thickly to his temples and pulse, a dark longing filling all his blood, running subtly through his brain, mysteriously penetrating and saturating his entire being.

Who was Miriam Wirt? What was she? What strange, wonderful substance materialized something so fascinating and so wonderful for him? What made him awaken suddenly in the night, her name burning in his brain, her strange, overwhelming presence flowing mysteriously in his blood, the thought of her consuming and devouring his furious existence?

What dark, wonderful secret did her soul encapsulate? What secret fascination was held there in the clandestine darkness of her mysterious soul, some fascinating thing that nearly drove him mad? What withheld secret of her heart would set him free, would set his brain on fire, would turn his heart to cinders in its incredible, powerful heat?

He could not say.

But still he knew it was there, and it drove him mad with passion and an aimless, undirected desire that burned violently in every cell of his being.

He was almost afraid of her, afraid to touch her, afraid to draw near to her when they were alone, for the incredible desire that he felt inside himself was almost violent, bestial, and seemed to flow from some secret and uncontrolled part of his existence.

"Now who do you want for your groomsmen?" she asked softly, slowly recovering her breath, trying to break the spell of passionate longing that held them both.

"Whoever you want, sweetheart," he said softly, his breath easing and becoming slower, though he still stared at her with the strange, hungry, level stare.

For it is with a young man in love.

"No, I mean it," she said, nudging his shoulder with her small, delicate hand, as though to awaken him from some distant sleep.

"Alright," Danny breathed, sinking against the back of the small couch. "Oh, I don't know... My two brothers, of course. How many do I need? I'm new at this."

"Four," she answered him, scrawling the names of Danny's brothers in the notebook after scratching out two others, and then sat patiently looking at him once more, the pen poised over the little notebook, waiting for him to continue on.

"Alright then, who else?"

"Who have you got there for the other two?" he inquired playfully, leaning once again over her to try and get a look at what she had written there on the paper.

"Now don't start that again," she told him. "Just tell me who you want as your other two groomsmen."

"Whoever you have written down there will be fine," he told her.

"Tell me," she insisted.

"Whom do you suggest?" Danny asked her, knowing that she would suggest the two that she had written down. "I know whomever I choose that I'm going to leave someone important out anyway."

Miriam knew what he was up to, but decided to play along anyhow.

"You might think about Stephen Gilbert," she said. "You and he were pretty close in college, and he's also a good friend of mine."

"Good" Danny said happily. "Good choice."

"But you make the next one," she insisted.

"Suggest someone else," he said, smiling up at her.

She laughed, amused by the subtle game they were playing.

"Well," she drawled, feigning careful thought, "you might also consider your cousin Brian Greenlaw."

"So be it," Danny proclaimed happily, bringing his large hand sharply down upon the couch. "I knew I could come up

with something if I only had a little help."

Now she scrawled nothing upon the paper, but only left it as she had inscribed it a few hours earlier.

Everything seemed magic for him now, even when he thought of her. The living city moved and breathed and pulsed with exultation and sweet triumph, and the air was full of a sweet, secret joy that he breathed deeply into his lungs—the strange cool warmth of the bright March air that still had the sharp tang of snow—a sweet, secret joy that he held in his lungs and devoured into his pulsing blood, drank into himself like some rare and priceless wine.

And now her presence was everywhere. He saw her in everything as he wound through the pulsing madness of the city mael. And everything was made rare and special and full of life for him because of her presence. She was to him absolute joy and sweet triumph, and it seemed that he would be dead and empty, a hollow being now if she were not with him.

One afternoon Danny roamed the city streets during the lunch hour, moving through the tangle of mass humanity like a frantic swimmer in a furious tide, through the hot and stifling masses, until the mob of pulsing hunger once again retreated to the dark cells in which they worked.

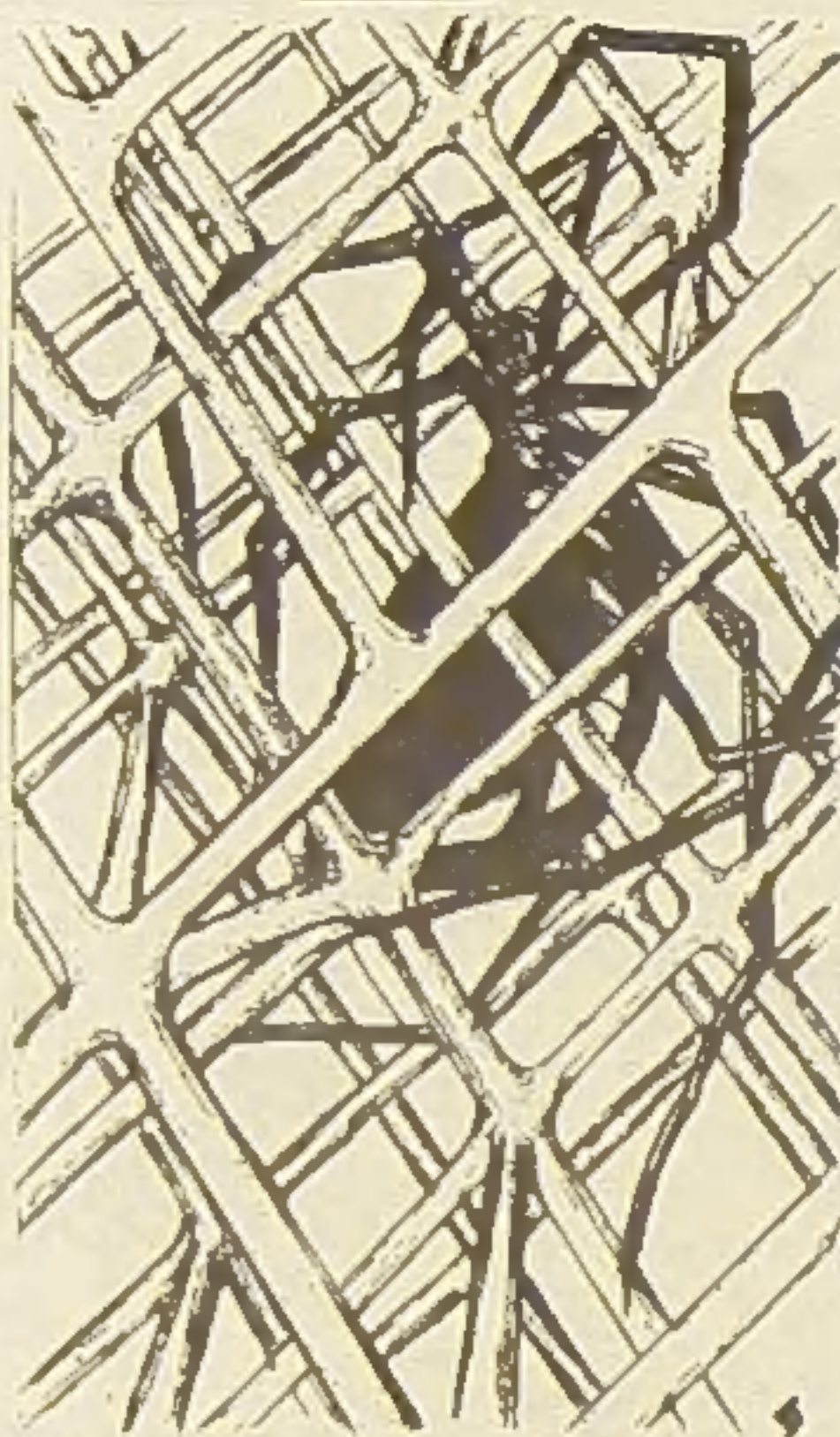
And after the furious lunch hour Danny retreated as well from the echoing city sidewalks, deciding to drive out into the neighboring countryside. The glints of new light were everywhere, shining on the water of small glassy ponds and sliding up and down the burnished steel of railroad tracks like magic spiders on a steel web.

The brilliant sunshine had at least momentarily warmed the earth and the March air in the last week, and Danny had had no intention of missing any of its loveliness. The new and wonderful magic of the warmth and brilliance of the sudden sunshine and the inexplicable joy that is in the air when winter finally yields its metal, frozen clasp of white death to the joyful sun filled his soul and made his brain flow with triumphant and tremendous exultation.

Feeling the warmth and seeing the brilliance made him want to cry out suddenly into the sweet, new air, made something catch in his throat, caused it to rise with sudden triumphant glory in his breast.

For it is with a young man in love.

And now, the day ended and yielding to the quiet coolness of the pressing night, Danny and Miriam sat on the dark stoop of her building, talking quietly to each other occasionally, then listening to the



distant sounds that rose and fell again under the blanket of gathering silence in the night.

"Will you marry me in June then," Danny asked her, impatient and joyful.

She smiled at him playfully, lovingly, and laid her head on his shoulder.

"Will you? Do you want to?" he asked her desperately.

"Of course I want to," she breathed quietly, happily.

"We won't have a lot of money—maybe never—but we both support ourselves now, granted barely, but we can find some way." He rambled on joyfully, hopeful and triumphant. "I just want to know that it's going to happen. I don't want to sit around and just talk about it and let it pass by. I want it to happen."

"It will, sweetheart," she told him, trying to reassure. "It will."

"It's really going to happen, isn't it?" he said, breathing deeply, inspiring the cool, tangy air with an exultation and unbearable joy flowing through his dark blood. There was still the strange taste of snow in his mouth upon the warmed March air. He continued to ramble on happily, lost in his own vision. "We're really going to get married in June. I can feel it. It's in the air."

"I know," she said simply. "I can feel it too."

"It's going to be wonderful in June. It's going to be warm in June. Every trace of snow and winter and death will be gone and everything will be warm and alive and flowing like living water. The grass will be bright green and glow in a cool,

steady wind. Your hair will be tossed in your face. The trees will sing out their praises to us with their leaves, and everywhere nature will rejoice that we have come together."

"No matter what," she told him, "we know that it will happen eventually."

"Eventually is forever!" he cried again in his impatient joy. He now had risen and was pacing madly back and forth on the wide step of the dark stoop, raving passionately and joyfully, waving his long, gangling arms and gesturing wildly with his large hands, looking like some sort of Lincolnian figure gone mad. She merely sat and gazed up at him, at this wild raving figure, with her loving, reassuring smile.

"I want it to happen in June," he continued. "On the first day in June. I want you to be my June bride, my lovely brown trout, my little speckled bride fish..."

"Sit down, sweetheart," she told him, laughing, and so he did, snuggling in playfully close to her.

For it is with a young man in love.


When he had gone away from her to go to his own dwelling, he had tasted again the tangy coldness of snow insinuating itself once again into the air.

He had slept a black, thoughtless sleep until he awoke suddenly at some undeterminable time in the night, awoke with a strange chill in his spine, as though a voice had whispered in his ear and he had awakened to respond. He felt some desperate urgency to respond to something, but could not direct the feeling or tell from whence it came.


He rose slowly from the bed, feeling strange, slow sleep still gripping at his bones and stumbled wearily to the window, as if to find the answer there, to discover what strange voice had spoken to him in the night.

Outside there was darkness—and snow. The large flakes fell like tiny spiraling dancers all adorned in white, all moving to the same strange, slow music, all moving in the same slow time. His mind seemed strangely focused to their slow, spiral falling. They were beautiful, and yet he hated them, for they would fill the streets with dark, cold slush and chill the earth once again, destroying and killing all that had come to life in the previous week.


Some secret, terrible doubt had germinated inside him, like a terrible consuming disease that he could not fight or give a name, as if some hope, some wish, some wonderful thing in him had died, and he stared out at the falling, spiraling dancers and longed for the warmth of June and magic spiders on a steel web.



The Key

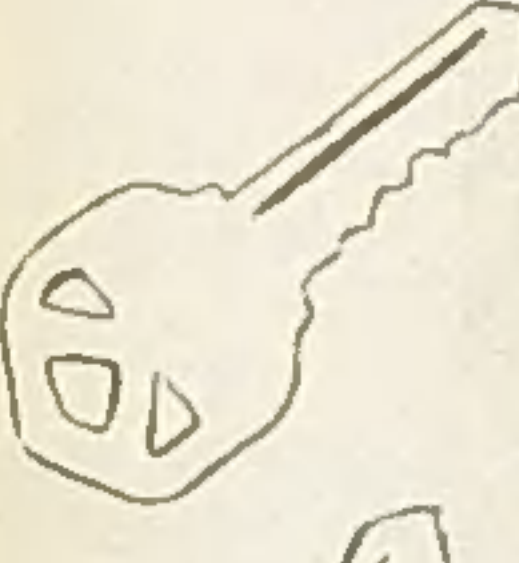


By Hermann Muller




Percy Walker took a final puff of his cigarette and threw it to the stone floor. It glowed warmly in the dim light shining through the barred windows. Ten years of planning were about to pay off. As the last of over three thousand days of captivity closed, Walker had to make an effort to control his nervous pacing and quickened breath. No need to cause undue suspicion now—after so many months of good acting! Now the staff's cars were pulling out of the gate and rumbling down the eroded gravel lane. In the darkness a man entered, and Walker narrowly avoided a gasp of fright, although he had naturally anticipated this moment.


"Good night, Percy," said the figure.
"Good night, Doc."




Then the door closed, and Walker felt a welcome thawing within his chest. He heard the click of a lock and footsteps fading down the hall. Now only one guard between himself and freedom, and he had bought the guard! It had taken almost all his resources to bribe the watchman and buy the key. He could leave any time he wanted.




Lying there on his bed, Percy thought the room seemed more comfortable than it had in memory. "You only appreciate some things when you give them up," he thought morosely.




Across the courtyard in the west the last lights blinked out. That was the direction he would hike for seven hours until he reached the main highway. Gleaming brightly above the vaguely silhouetted rooftops hung Vega, outshining its other nightly companions. "Lead the way, little buddy," chuckled Percy, who didn't know that it was Vega.



With the near perfect silence, he reached into the slit in his mattress and pulled out the key.



In savoring the moment, Walker's mind was drawn back to past times and events. The strange people and places frightened him. The unwanted responsibilities and rules angered him. His wife had tried to leave him when their savings had run out. He'd flown into one of his



rages and thrown her against the wall with such force it had killed her. Then the bungled suicide attempt. "You get precious little appreciation, in spite of all the hell," Walker mused. He had been a very talented young architect—more accurately an artist. And then they had pushed him into a corner.

When he awoke, light was streaming in through the window. Pretty young nurses were fumbling for bobby-pins and arranging little white hats, and talking about flashy young interns and the sale at Sears. The door opened and a man sauntered in.


"Good morning, Percy."

"Good morning."


"Are you coming in my office today?"

"I'll be there around three. I didn't sleep well."

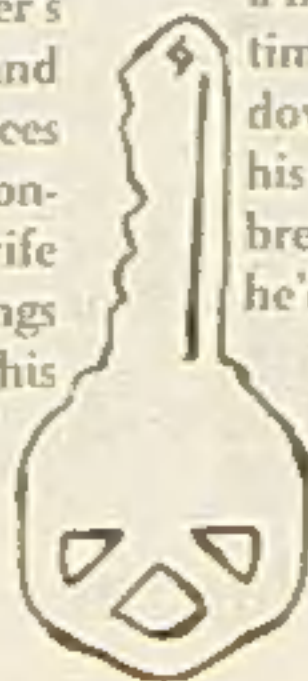
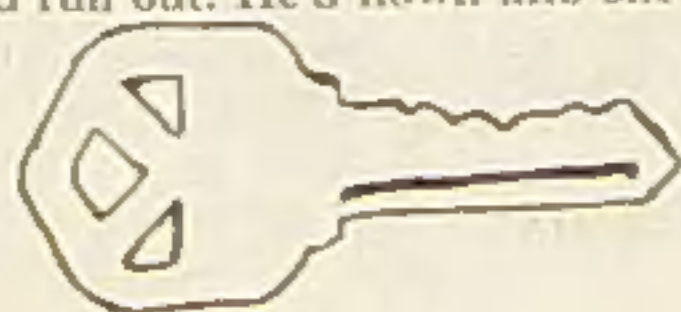
"I'll see you then."

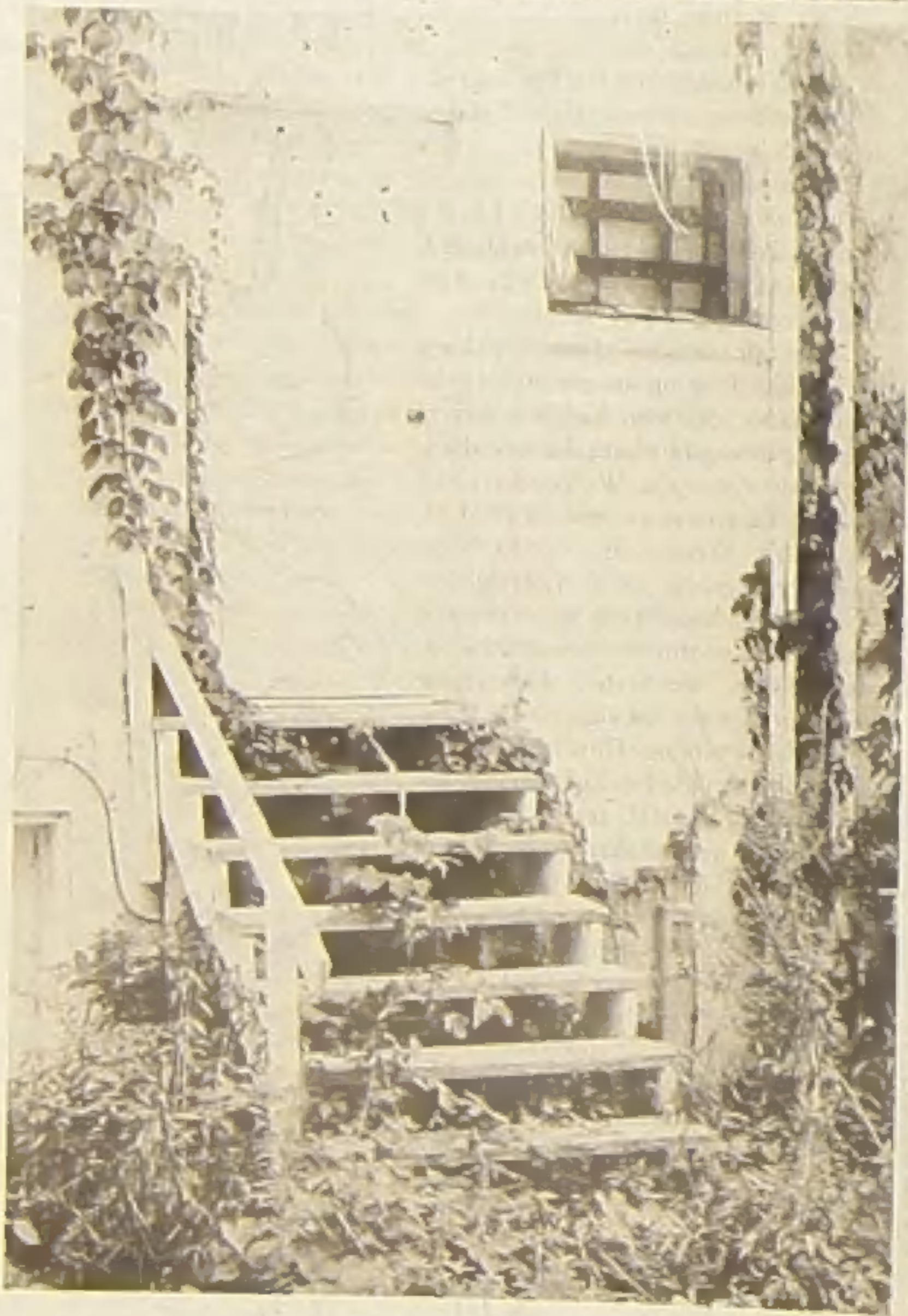
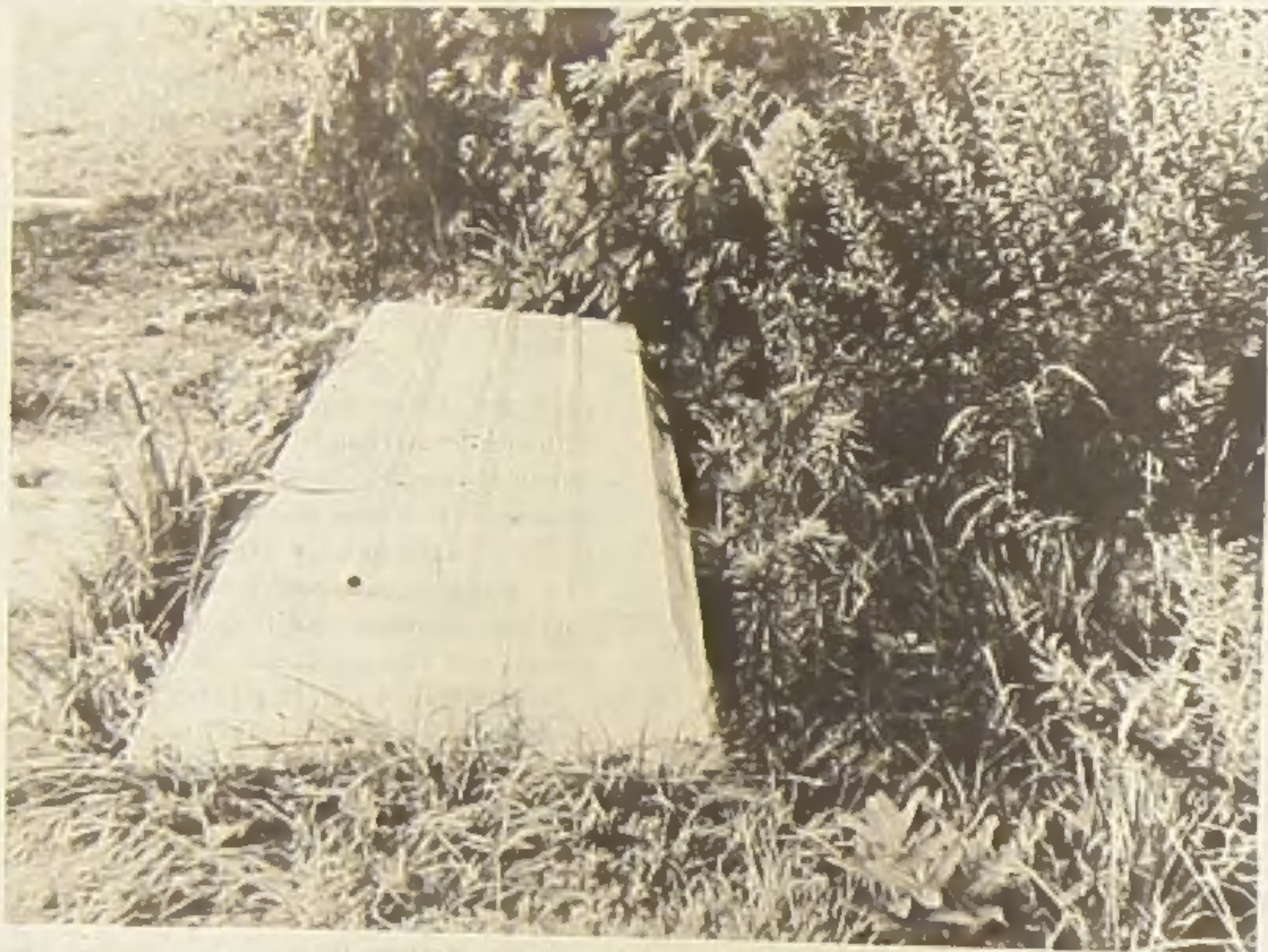


There was a pause and a nod. Then the man left. Percy sighed with contentment. Today was the day! Ten years of planning were going to pay off.

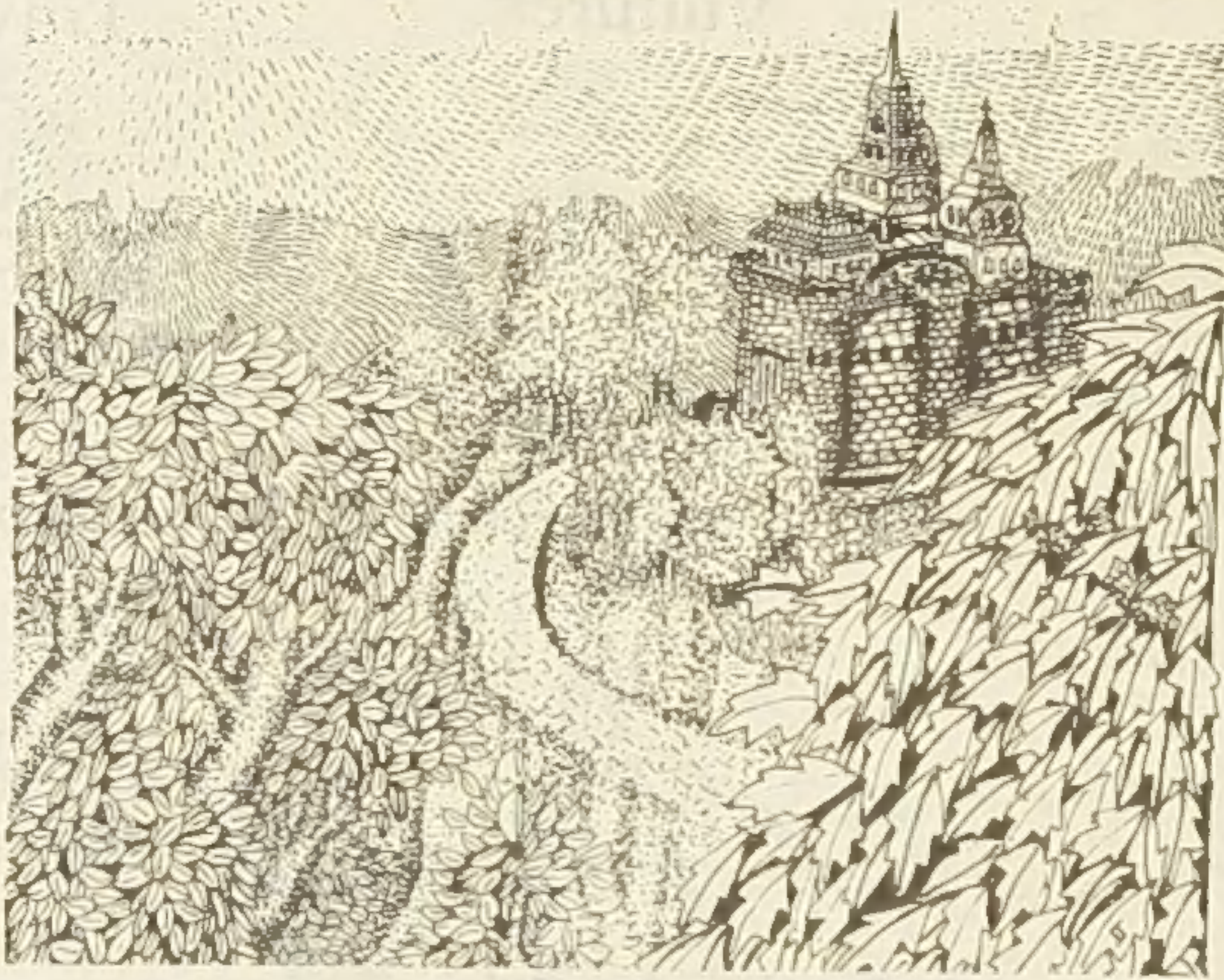


Doctor Sprouse ambled moodily down the corridor keeping an eye out for the maintenance girl who had left several bags of garbage blocking the side door. "Too bad about the Walker guy," he thought. Like most patients here at St. Elizabeth's, Percy was free to leave whenever he got his problems straightened out. After a hopeful tap on the elevator button, Sprouse shuffled toward the door marked "stairs." The State had been none too generous in the last eight years. Now, with a new young Governor at the capitol, there might finally be money for what most of the staff really aimed at: research. It was time that people started to recognize the field for what it really was: an art—and himself an artist. Even Nancy seemed to be losing faith in him lately. He knew they were headed toward a big blowout, so he'd been working overtime. "They always hit you when you're down," he laminated. When he reached his small and cluttered office, out of breath from the climb, he began to doubt he'd be going anywhere for some time.





Photos by Rick Evans



Dawn

Color splashes against
The yawning horizon.
As the early birds stretch
Sitting up in their beds.

Oh, their day's going to be
Fun, and long,
And full of thinking time.

As they climb out of bed
With eyes closed.
Eyebrows raised.
Chin on chest.
They stand there swaying.
Contemplating their determination.

Undeniably.
Some fall back to bed.
As others
Reach for their watch.

Craig Ball

The Foxhunt

pasing beneath
the split-rail fence
cutting across
the open field
backtracking through
the briar patch
fleeing from his
assailants

bawling hounds
clinging the trail
hunting down
the chicken thief
singing out
their warning cry
running down
the convict

blood-red hunt coats
streaking the field
snorting geldings
tearing the ground
charging bugles
chanting their tune
tallyho!

Susan Stone

Vultures

black silhouettes
gliding motionlessly
in silent flight
encircling blocking
the sun's piercing rays
casting shadows
on life's final stage

Susan Stone



On Life

Life...
Stormy, yet calm
Slowly passes us by
Like a babbling brook
Turning a waterfall on occasion
Then calm, silent, still...
Of the question of its meaning
Lingers in one man's mind
That all must ponder and know
They must find the answer
Before it is too late
And alas the brook joins
The inevitable sea
The end of yet another trip
Through the course of time

Martin C. Oetting

Travelling

If you should go out travelling
Try not to go too fast,
For, the faster your travels,
The less time unravels,
You'll end up in the past.

Curtis Steere

Imprints

Outside my window
By the gate,
The grass is peeled back
For a mud path.

There in the mud
Lies layer upon layer
Of paw prints.

I open the window
And call,
"Sparky!"

She comes smiling
Pacing the path
In front of the fence
Barking,
And making more prints.

Craig Ball

Retrospect

After the snow has gone,
And life has returned to normal,
There's always the gravel on the street
And those few patches of snow
Still lingering on to remind us
Of what the weather used to be,
And how we acted in it.

Craig Ball